

Civil War Weapons Education Plan

Overview: Civil War field artillery was organized in batteries. Although it varied from time to time, a battery in the Union army consisted of six of the same kind of cannons. In Confederate service a battery was normally only four guns and unfortunately for supply officers may have consisted of two or three different kinds of weapons. United States regulations prescribed a captain as a battery commander. Lieutenants commanded two gun sections in battle.

A battery would have had a left and right and possibly a center section. One gun and caisson with limbers made up a platoon under a sergeant and two corporals. The sergeant was the "chief of the piece" and often the gunner. A gun crew consisted of the gunner and seven artillerymen who were assigned numbers for servicing the cannon. In light artillery batteries, cannoneers marched beside the weapon or sat on ammunition chests. Officers, sergeants, buglers, and guidon-bearers rode horses. A full strength battery exceeded 100 officers and men. A limber in the Union army was drawn by six horses and due to the lack of horses, Confederate limbers used four horses.

Grades: 3rd – 8th

Time: 2- 30 minute class periods

Learning Objectives

- Students will research the weapons and military strategies used during the Civil War and will review military terminology.
- Students will collect pictures of Civil War weapons and research the purpose of each.

Educational Standards

From the South Carolina Curriculum and Standards available online at

<http://ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/cso/standards/ss/> &
<http://ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/cso/standards/ela/documents/standards.pdf>

Social Studies

3-4.4, 4-6.4, 4-6.6, 8-3.5, 8-3.6

Language Arts

3-8-R1.1, 3-8-R1.3, 3-5-R1.15/16, 3-R3.8, 4-5-R3.4, 3-8-W1.6, 3-8-W1.6.1, 3-8-W2.2, 3-8-W4.1, 3-4-C2.1, 6-8-R3.3,

Materials

- Internet access
- Pictures of Civil War weapons
- Thomas, Dean, Cannons: An Introduction to Civil War Artillery (Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 1985).

Directions of the Activity

1. Give students a vocabulary list of terms related to Civil War weaponry and military strategies.
2. Instruct students to locate web sites showing pictures of Civil War weaponry and the functions of each.
3. Divide the class into groups giving each group a task to complete in order to illustrate how teamwork was vital for a Civil War gun battery.
4. Students will brainstorm and list reasons that weaponry has changed throughout history. After two minutes, have students pass the list to another person to add ideas. After all students have added ideas, share these with the class.
5. Students will write an essay about Civil War weapons and their functions. Cite reasons why there were such differences between the Union and Confederate weapons and strategies.
6. You may plan a visit to Fort Moultrie for an artillery talk.